

RESPONSE ACCOMPANYING REQUEST FOR CONTINUED EXAMINATION
Serial No. 10/663,304
Page 6 of 11

REMARKS

This Response accompanies a Request for Continued Examination and is intended to be fully responsive to the Final Office Action dated August 8, 2005, the Advisory Action dated November 22, 2005, and the Advisory Action dated January 10, 2006. In view of the following discussion, the Applicants believe that all claims are presently allowable.

CLAIM AMENDMENTS

Claim 9 has been amended to correct a minor error. Specifically, the term "the etching step" has been amended to reflect "the step (d)" to conform with the naming convention used throughout the remaining claims. The Applicants submit that this amendment was made for reasons unrelated to patentability and adds no new matter.

CLAIM REJECTIONS

Claims 1-17 and 40-45 presently stand rejected as being unpatentable over United States Patent No. 6,797,633, issued September 28, 2004, to *Jiang, et al.* (hereinafter *Jiang*) in view of United States Patent Application Publication Serial No. 2004/0161930, published August 19, 2004 to *Ma, et al.* (hereinafter *Ma*), United States Patent No. 6,797,633, issued July 30, 2002 to *Ikeda* (hereinafter *Ikeda*), Taiwan Patent 544,815 published August 1, 2003 to *Chun, et al.* (hereinafter *Chun*), and United States Patent 6,177,147 issued on January 23, 2001 to *Samukawa, et al.* (hereinafter *Samukawa*). In response, the Applicants have amended claims 1 and 40 to more clearly recite aspects of the invention.

Independent claims 1 and 40, as amended, recite limitations not taught or suggested by any combination of the cited references. *Jiang* describes a method for forming a dual damascene trench patterning method. However, *Jiang* fails to teach or suggest etching in-situ the cap layer, a trench in the second dielectric layer, the masking material, and the second barrier layer, by providing a plasma source power of at least about 1,000 Watts and a bias power of at least about 800 Watts while etching, as recited in claim 1, or supplying a source power of at

RESPONSE ACCOMPANYING REQUEST FOR CONTINUED EXAMINATION
Serial No. 10/663,304
Page 7 of 11

least about 1000 Watts at a frequency of above about 100 MHz to the plasma source electrode and a bias power of at least about 800 Watts to the substrate bias electrode while etching the dielectric layer as recited in claim 40.

Ma discloses a method of *in-situ* discharge prior to a plasma etch in order to avoid arcing within the chamber during the plasma etch process. (*Ma*, paragraph [0001].) *Ma* further discloses applying an RF power in the range of 100 to 1000 Watts for a 200 mm wafer and from 100 to 2000 Watts for a 300 mm wafer. (*Ma*, paragraph [0028].) However, *Ma* is silent regarding the bias power applied. As such, *Ma* fails to teach or suggest a modification of *Jiang*, alone or in combination with any of the other cited references, that would yield a plasma source power of at least 1,000 Watts and a bias power of at least about 800 Watts while etching during at least a portion of the etch step, as recited in claims 1 and 40.

Moreover, although the Examiner contends that it would have been obvious to modify the etch steps of *Jiang* using the power, pressure, and flow rates as taught by the discharge sequence of *Ma* in order to avoid arcing during the plasma etch processes, *Ma* discloses that the discharge sequence is performed prior to the plasma etch process. (*Ma*, paragraph [0014]). Specifically, *Ma* states that no etching of the photoresist layer or substrate occurs during the discharge sequence. (*Ma*, paragraph [0028]). As such, *Ma* teaches away from any combination that results in providing these conditions while etching, as recited in claims 1 and 40. Instead, the combination of *Ma* and *Jiang* would result in a method wherein a discharge step that does not etch the substrate would be performed prior to plasma etching in order to avoid arcing. Thus, there is no suggestion to modify the etch steps of *Jiang* with the process conditions of the discharge sequence taught by *Ma*, in a manner that would yield the limitations recited in claims 1 and 40.

Ikeda discloses a method of manufacturing a semiconductor device wherein multiple etch steps are provided for etching different layers formed on a substrate. One step of the etch process provides 1600W of electricity to an upper electrode and 1400W of electricity to a lower electrode. The Examiner

RESPONSE ACCOMPANYING REQUEST FOR CONTINUED EXAMINATION
Serial No. 10/663,304
Page 8 of 11

asserts that it would have been obvious to modify *Jiang* with the power, pressure, and flow rates as taught by *Ikedda* to "reduce the F radicals which form a hardened surface layer." (Final Office Action dated August 8, 2005, p. 6, ll. 3-11.) The Applicants respectfully disagree.

Ikedda provides no suggestion or motivation to modify the etch process as taught by *Jiang* (alone or modified by any of the cited references) in a manner that yields the limitations recited in claims 1 and 40 because *Ikedda* teaches a different mechanism to reduce F radicals in the process chamber. Specifically, *Ikedda* teaches that, in a parallel plate plasma etcher, "to reduce the excessively generated F radicals, the upper electrode 703 is made of Si, which has high reactivity for F radicals. That is, the excessively generated F radicals are trapped by Si of the upper electrode so that F radicals are reduced." (*Ikedda*, col. 2, ll. 40-44.)

In addition, *Ikedda* teaches that sputtered Si from the upper electrode may deposit on the photoresist and form a hardened resist surface layer. *Ikedda* further teaches that the electricity to the upper electrode should be removed – i.e., the upper electrode should be grounded – to cause a reduction in excess Si atoms which prevents the hardened surface layer from being formed on the photoresist. (*Id.*, col. 5, ll. 61-67.) Therefore, if one wished to prevent the hardened surface layer from being formed on the photoresist, the upper electrode should be grounded.

As such, the motivation provided by the Examiner to combine *Ikedda* and *Jiang* would result in a process that is modified by either or both of forming an upper electrode of silicon and/or connecting the upper electrode to ground. As such, the combination of *Ikedda* and *Jiang* (alone or modified by any of the cited references) fails to yield a plasma source power of at least about 1,000 W and a bias power of at least about 800 W while etching during at least a portion of the etch step, as recited in claims 1 and 40.

In the Advisory Action dated November 22, 2005, the Examiner asserts that "the pointed to teachings of *Ikedda* do not negate the argument that *Ikedda* teaches the use of the recited bias power during at least a portion of the etch

RESPONSE ACCOMPANYING REQUEST FOR CONTINUED EXAMINATION
Serial No. 10/663,304
Page 9 of 11

process... i.e., the upper electrode would not be grounded during the entire etching step." However, the Applicants respectfully point out that the Examiner's rebuttal inappropriately presumes the combination. In other words, the Examiner is rebutting the argument that there is no motivation to combine the references in the manner suggested by stating that, if combined, the references would teach the limitations recited in the claims.

The initial burden lies on the Examiner to create a *prima facie* case of obviousness, which requires that some suggestion or motivation exists, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or to combine reference teachings. In addition, the teaching or suggestion to make the claimed combination must be found in the prior art, and must not be based on the Applicant's disclosure. *MPEP* §2142 (citing *In re Vaack*, 947 F.2d 488, 20 USPQ2d 1438 (Fed. Cir. 1991)).

The requirement for providing a suggestion or motivation to combine the teachings of references is "rigorously applied" by the courts. (*In re Dembiczak*, 50 USPQ2d 1614, 1617 (Fed. Cir. 1999) ("Our case law makes clear that the best defense against the subtle but powerful attraction of a hindsight-based obviousness analysis is rigorous application of the requirement for a showing of the teaching or motivation to combine prior art references."); see also, *In re Kotzab*, 55 USPQ2d 1313, 1317 (Fed. Cir. 2000) ("particular findings must be made as to the reason the skilled artisan, with no knowledge of the claimed invention, would have selected these components for combination in the manner claimed"))).

Examiners can satisfy this burden "only by showing some objective teaching in the prior art that would lead an individual to combine the relevant teachings of the references." (*In re Fritch*, 23 USPQ2d 1780, 1783 (Fed. Cir. 1992); see also, *Interconnect Planning Corp. v. Feil*, 774 F.2d 1132, 1143 (Fed. Cir. 1985) (There must be some reason for the combination other than the hindsight gleaned from the invention itself to selectively combine prior art references to render a subsequent invention obvious.))

RESPONSE ACCOMPANYING REQUEST FOR CONTINUED EXAMINATION
Serial No. 10/663,304
Page 10 of 11

In the present case, the Examiner has not pointed to any "objective teaching" in *Ikeda* (or elsewhere) that would "lead an individual to combine the relevant teachings of the references." Specifically, as discussed above, *Ikeda* does not teach or suggest the plasma source and bias powers, as recited in claims 1 and 40, to obtain the benefit cited by the Examiner. The Examiner appears to be inadvertently and inappropriately using hindsight analysis to pick and choose teachings from the references to support the obviousness rejection. However, it is well-settled that "[o]ne cannot use hindsight reconstruction to pick and choose among isolated disclosures in the prior art to deprecate the claimed invention." (*In re Fine*, 837 F.2d 1071, 1075, 5 USPQ2d 1596, 1600 (Fed. Cir. 1988)) Accordingly, the Applicants submit that the teachings of *Ikeda* cannot be combined with the remaining references in the manner suggested by the Examiner because there is no motivation or suggestion to do so.

Chun discloses a process for etching a nitride layer and an oxide layer using O₂, N₂, and CF₄ in a ratio of O₂:N₂:CF₄ equal to 4-50:0-10:1. *Chun* further discloses applying an RF power in the range of 100 to 1000 Watts but is silent regarding any bias power applied. (*Chun*, Abstract.) As such, *Chun* fails to teach or suggest a modification of any combination of *Jiang*, *Ma*, and *Ikeda* that would yield a plasma source power of at least about 1,000 W and a bias power of at least about 800 W during at least a portion of the etch step, as recited in claims 1 and 40.

Samukawa discloses a process and apparatus for treating a substrate using an ultra-high frequency (UHF) plasma. *Samukawa* further generally discloses applying a UHF RF power in the range of 0 to 1000 Watts but is silent regarding the bias power applied. (*Samukawa*, Figs 3, 6-8, and accompanying text.) As such, *Samukawa* fails to teach or suggest a modification of any combination of *Jiang*, *Ma*, *Ikeda*, and *Chun* that would yield a plasma source power of at least about 1,000 Watts and a bias power of at least about 800 Watts during at least a portion of the etch step, as recited in claims 1 and 40.

Therefore, a *prima facie* case of obviousness has not been established because any permissible combination of the cited references fails to yield all of

RESPONSE ACCOMPANYING REQUEST FOR CONTINUED EXAMINATION
Serial No. 10/663,304
Page 11 of 11

the limitations recited in each of independent claims 1 and 40, and claims 2-17 and 41-45, respectively depending therefrom. Specifically, the combination of the cited references fail to teach or suggest a plasma source power of at least about 1,000 Watts and a bias power of at least about 800 Watts during at least a portion of the etch step, as recited in claims 1 and 40. Moreover, a *prima facie* case of obviousness has further not been established because there is no suggestion or motivation to combine the cited references in the manner suggested by the Examiner.


Thus, independent claims 1 and 40, and claims 2-17 and 41-45, respectively depending therefrom, are patentable over *Jiang* in view of *Ma, Ikeda, Chun, and Samukawa*. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully request that the rejection be withdrawn and the claims allowed.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the Applicants submit that all claims now pending are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, both reconsideration of this application and its swift passage to issuance are earnestly solicited.

If the Examiner believes that any unresolved issues still exist, it is requested that the Examiner telephone Mr. Alan Taboada at (732) 935-7100 so that appropriate arrangements can be made for resolving such issues as expeditiously as possible.

Respectfully submitted,

 2/8/06
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